

Watershed moment in NYC: New law allows noncitizens to vote

By Bobby Caina Calvin
Associated Press

(AP) — More than 800,000 noncitizens and “Dreamers” in New York City will have access to the ballot box — and could vote in municipal elections as early as next year — after Mayor Eric Adams allowed legislation to automatically become law Sunday.

Opponents have vowed to challenge the new law, which the City Council approved a month ago. Unless a judge halts its implementation, New York City is the first major U.S. city to grant widespread municipal voting rights to noncitizens.

More than a dozen communities across the U.S. already allow noncitizens to cast ballots in local elections, including 11 towns in Maryland and two in Vermont.

Noncitizens still wouldn't be able to vote for president or members of Congress in federal races, or in the state elections that pick the governor, judges and legislators. The Board of Elections must now begin drawing an implementation plan by July, including voter registration rules and provisions that would create separate ballots for municipal races to prevent noncitizens from casting ballots in federal and state contests.



New York City Mayor Eric Adams speaks during a news conference in the Brooklyn borough of New York, Tuesday, Jan. 4, 2022. More than 800,000 noncitizens and so-called Dreamers in New York City will have access to the ballot box, and could vote in municipal elections as early as 2023, after Adams allowed legislation approved by the City Council a month earlier to automatically become law on Sunday, Jan. 9, 2022.

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(AP Photo/Seth Wenig, File)

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Watershed moment in NYC: New law allows noncitizens to vote

Continued from Front

It's a watershed moment for the nation's most populous city, where legally documented, voting-age noncitizens comprise nearly one in nine of the city's 7 million voting-age inhabitants. The movement to win voting rights for noncitizens prevailed after numerous setbacks.

The measure would allow noncitizens who have been lawful permanent residents of the city for at least 30 days, as well as those authorized to work in the U.S., including "Dreamers," to help select the city's mayor, city council members, borough presidents, comptroller and public advocate.

"Dreamers" are young im-

migrants brought to the U.S. illegally as children who would benefit from the never-passed DREAM Act or the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, which allows them to remain in the country if they meet certain criteria. The first elections in which noncitizens would be allowed to vote are in 2023.

"We build a stronger de-

mocracy when we include the voices of immigrants," said former City Councilmember Ydanis Rodriguez, who led the charge to win approval for the legislation. Rodriguez, who Adams appointed as his transportation commissioner, thanked the mayor for his support and expects a vigorous defense against any legal challenges.

Adams recently cast uncertainty over the legislation when he raised concern about the monthlong residency standard, but later said those concerns did not mean he would veto the bill.

While there was some question whether Adams

could stop the bill from becoming law, the 30-day time limit for the mayor to take action expired at the stroke of midnight.

"I believe that New Yorkers should have a say in their government, which is why I have and will continue to support this important legislation," Adams said in a statement released Saturday night. He added that his earlier concerns were put at ease after what he called productive dialogue with colleagues.

Former Mayor Bill de Blasio had similar concerns but did not move to veto the measure before vacating City Hall at the end of the year. □

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Social workers' field safety remains concern after killing

By John O'Connor

Associated Press

(AP) — Illinois officials are seeking answers after the killing last week of a state child welfare worker during a home visit — the second such tragedy to occur in less than five years.

Deidre Silas, an investigator with the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services, was stabbed to death last Tuesday when she responded to a call of possible endangerment of children in a home in the central Illinois town of Thayer.

A man related to one or more of the six children who were at home at the time, 32-year-old Benjamin Reed, is being held in the Sangamon County Jail without bond on first-degree murder and other charges.

An attempt by The Associated Press to reach Reed's attorney on Friday was unsuccessful.

Silas' death is the second time in four-and-a-half years that state officials and the social work community are asking what should have been done, but wasn't, to prevent it. DCFS investigator Pamela Knight, 59, died following a brutal beating while attempting to remove an endangered child from his father in September 2017. Like Silas, Knight was alone when she was attacked. Officials at DCFS, which has 23,000 children under its care, have not released details about the circumstances behind Silas' visit to the home in Thayer, located 23 miles (37 kilometers) south of Springfield, but DCFS Director Marc Smith said last week that agency protocol was followed.

The attack on Silas also marked the 21st time since 2017 that caseworkers were subject to "threats or acts of violence" during 2.5 million home visits in Illinois, agency spokesman Bill McCaffrey said.

Her death has raised questions of why case workers are sent into potentially volatile environments alone, and whether understaffing — a problem that has

plagued DCFS for decades despite a federal consent decree regulating it — affects the response of case workers in the field.

"DCFS, if you're sending someone into a situation like this, just send two at a time," Silas' father, Roy Graham, said last week. "Whether it's a male and female or two males or two females, either way, but send two per visit, not just one."

Police agencies historically have been willing and able to help. That cooperation was strengthened after Knight's death.

A law signed in 2018 allows law enforcement officers to cross into another jurisdiction to back up a home visit.

Knight, who was based in Sterling, did have police backup initially.

But the boy Knight was seeking was not at his father's home, forcing Knight to check his grandparents' home in the next county. She decided that waiting for a new police agency to accompany her jeopardized the boy's safety. The boy's father met her at the second stop, and beat and kicked her so severely that she suffered brain damage and died five months later. Arnold Black, a child protection specialist and supervisor in the DCFS Urbana office, said that any time a case worker or a supervisor believes there should be two workers on a home visit, it's approved. And there is no hesitancy to seek police backup, as outlined in the agency's administrative procedures on field safety.

"Sometimes, taking the police can agitate the client. You've got to know the family ... You have some families that are going to yell and scream at you for the first five minutes, but then they're going to let you in," Black said.

"But if it's a newer case, or if it's in a rural area, I have no problem pulling another worker to go."

The problem, though, is that pairing workers stretches the workforce, sometimes resulting in plucking em-



Marc Smith, director of the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services, discusses the stabbing death of state child welfare worker Diedre Silas during a news conference, Wednesday, Jan. 5, 2022, in Springfield, Ill. Silas, 36, was conducting a visit Tuesday, Jan. 4, on a home in Thayer, south of Springfield, when she was stabbed. A man living in the home, 32-year-old Benjamin H. Reed, faces charges of first-degree murder, aggravated battery and unlawful restraint. He is being held in the Sangamon County Jail on \$5 million bond.

(AP Photo/John O'Connor)

ployees from other offices, Black said.

The Urbana office has a worker shortage of more than 6% and agents on Black's team have caseloads of 30 to 50 families per worker, in many cases ex-

ceeding the limit of a 1988 federal consent decree that limits to 12 the number of new cases assigned monthly to each worker.

The Knight tragedy also resulted, with a push from the DCFS employees' union,

the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees Council 31, in office-based security guards and improved access to law enforcement records of people to be visited. □

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Stay home or work sick? Omicron poses a conundrum

By Anne D'innocenzio and
Dee-ann Durbin
Associated Press

(AP) - As the raging omicron variant of COVID-19 infects workers across the nation, millions of those whose jobs don't provide paid sick days are having to choose between their health and their paycheck. While many companies instituted more robust sick leave policies at the beginning of the pandemic, some of those have since been scaled back with the rollout of the vaccines, even though omicron has managed to evade the shots. Meanwhile, the current labor shortage is adding to the pressure of workers having to decide whether to show up to their job sick if they can't afford to stay home.

"It's a vicious cycle," said Daniel Schneider, professor of public policy at the Harvard Kennedy School of Government. "As staffing gets depleted because people are out sick, that means that those that are on the job have more to do and are even more reluctant to call in sick when they in turn get sick."

Low-income hourly workers are especially vulnerable. Nearly 80% of all private sector workers get at least one paid sick day, according to a national compensation survey of employee benefits conducted in March by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. But only 33% of workers whose wages are at the bottom 10% get paid sick leave, compared with 95% in the top 10%.



A medical technician performs a nasal swab test on a motorist queued up in a line at a COVID-19 testing site near All City Stadium Dec. 30, 2021, in southeast Denver. Millions of workers whose jobs don't provide paid sick days are having to choose between their health and their paycheck as the omicron variant of COVID-19 rages across the nation. While many companies instituted more robust sick leave policies at the beginning of the pandemic, those have since been scaled back with the rollout of the vaccines, even though the omicron variant has managed to evade them.

(AP Photo/David Zalubowski, File)

A survey this past fall of roughly 6,600 hourly low-wage workers conducted by Harvard's Shift Project, which focuses on inequality, found that 65% of those workers who reported being sick in the last month said they went to work anyway. That's lower than the 85% who showed up to work sick before the pandemic, but much higher than it should be in the middle of a public health crisis. Schneider says it could get worse because of omicron and the labor shortage.

What's more, Schneider noted that the share of workers with paid sick leave before the pandemic barely budged during the pandemic — 50% versus 51% respectively. He further noted many of the working

poor surveyed don't even have \$400 in emergency funds, and families will now be even more financially strapped with the expiration of the child tax credit, which had put a few hundred dollars in families' pockets every month.

The Associated Press interviewed one worker who started a new job with the state of New Mexico last month and started experiencing COVID-like symptoms earlier in the week. The worker, who asked not to be named because it might jeopardize their employment, took a day off to get tested and two more days to wait for the results. A supervisor called and told the worker they would qualify for paid sick days only if the COVID test turns out to be positive. If the test is negative, the worker will have to take the days without pay, since they haven't accrued enough time for sick leave.

"I thought I was doing the right thing by protecting my co-workers," said the worker, who is still awaiting the results and estimates it will cost \$160 per day of work missed if they test negative. "Now I wish I just would've gone to work and not said anything."

A Trader Joe's worker in California, who also asked

not to be named because they didn't want to risk their job, said the company lets workers accrue paid time off that they can use for vacations or sick days. But once that time is used up, employees often feel like they can't afford to take unpaid days.

"I think many people now come to work sick or with what they call 'allergies' because they feel they have no other choice," the worker said.

Trader Joe's offered hazard pay until last spring, and even paid time off if workers had COVID-related symptoms. But the worker said those benefits have ended. The company also no longer requires customers to wear masks in all of its stores.

Other companies are similarly curtailing sick time that they offered earlier in the pandemic. Kroger, the country's biggest traditional grocery chain, is ending some benefits for unvaccinated salaried workers in an attempt to compel more of them to get the jab as COVID-19 cases rise again. Unvaccinated workers enrolled in Kroger's health care plan will no longer be eligible to receive up to two weeks paid emergency leave if they become infected —

a policy that was put into place last year when vaccines were unavailable.

Meanwhile, Walmart, the nation's largest retailer, is slashing pandemic-related paid leave in half — from two weeks to one — after the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reduced isolation requirements for people who don't have symptoms after they test positive.

Workers have received some relief from a growing number of states. In the last decade, 14 states and the District of Columbia have passed laws or ballot measures requiring employers to provide paid sick leave, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures.

On the federal front, however, the movement has stalled. Congress passed a law in the spring of 2020 requiring most employers to provide paid sick leave for employees with COVID-related illnesses. But the requirement expired on Dec. 31 of that same year. Congress later extended tax credits for employers who voluntarily provide paid sick leave, but the extension lapsed at the end of September, according to the U.S. Department of Labor.

In November, the U.S. House passed a version of President Joe Biden's Build Back Better plan that would require employers to provide 20 days of paid leave for employees who are sick or caring for a family member. But the fate of that bill is uncertain in the Senate.

"We can't do a patchwork sort of thing. It has to be holistic. It has to be meaningful," said Josephine Kalipeni, executive director at Family Values @ Work, a national network of 27 state and local coalitions helping to advocate for such policies as paid sick days.

The U.S. is one of only 11 countries worldwide without any federal mandate for paid sick leave, according to a 2020 study by the World Policy Analysis Center at the University of California, Los Angeles. □



Prospects dim as U.S., Russia a to meet over Ukraine

By Matthew Lee
Associated Press

(AP) — With the fate of Ukraine and potentially broader post-Cold War European stability at stake, the United States and Russia are holding critical strategic talks that could shape the future of not only their relationship but the relationship between the U.S. and its NATO allies. Prospects are bleak.

Though the immediacy of the threat of a Russian invasion of Ukraine will top the agenda in a series of high-level meetings that get underway on Monday, there is a litany of festering but largely unrelated disputes, ranging from arms control to cybercrime and diplomatic issues, for Washington and Moscow to overcome if tensions are to ease. And the recent deployment of Russian troops to Kazakhstan may cast a shadow over the entire exercise.

With much at risk and both warning of dire consequences of failure, the two sides have been positioning themselves for what will be a nearly unprecedented flurry of activity in Europe this week. Yet the wide divergence in their opening positions bodes ill for any type of speedy resolution, and levels of distrust appear higher than at any point since the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Secretary of State Antony Blinken said bluntly Sunday that he doesn't expect any breakthroughs in the coming week. Instead, he said a more likely positive outcome would be an agreement to de-escalate tensions in the short term and return to talks at an appropriate time in the future. But the U.S. will have to see a de-escalation for there to be actual progress.

"It's very hard to see that happening when there's an ongoing escalation when Russia has a gun to the head of Ukraine with 100,000 troops near its borders, the possibility of doubling that on very short order," Blinken said on ABC's "This Week."

U.S. officials on Saturday



Russian troops take part in drills at the Kadamovskiy firing range in the Rostov region in southern Russia, Dec. 14, 2021. With the fate of Ukraine and potentially broader post-Cold War European stability at stake, the United States and Russia are holding critical strategic talks that could shape the future of not only their bilateral ties but the relationship between the U.S. and its NATO allies. Prospects are bleak.

(AP Photo, file)

unveiled some details of the administration's stance, which seem to fall well short of Russian demands. The officials said the U.S. is open to discussions on curtailing possible future deployments of offensive missiles in Ukraine and putting limits on American and NATO military exercises in Eastern Europe if Russia is willing to back off on Ukraine.

But they also said Russia will be hit hard with economic sanctions should it intervene in Ukraine. In addition to direct sanctions on Russian entities, those penalties could include significant restrictions on products exported from the U.S. to Russia and potentially foreign-made products subject to U.S. jurisdiction.

Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov, who will lead Russia's delegation at the Geneva talks, responded harshly to Blinken's statement.

"Demands of the United States and other NATO countries that we carry out some de-escalation measures on our territory are excluded from the discussion. This is a non-starter in the literal sense of the word," Ryabkov said in an interview with the Tass news agency. Russia wants the talks initially to produce formally binding security guaran-

tees for itself with a pledge that NATO will not further expand eastward and the removal of U.S. troops and weapons from parts of Europe. But the U.S. and its allies say those are non-starters intentionally designed by Moscow to distract and divide. They insist that any Russian military intervention in Ukraine will prompt "massive consequences" that will dramatically disrupt Russia's economy even if they have global ripple effects.

In a bid to forestall efforts by Russia to sow discord in the West, the Biden administration has gone out of its way to stress that neither Ukraine nor Europe more broadly will be excluded from any discussion of Ukraine's or Europe's security.

Biden administration officials allow that neither topic can be entirely ignored when senior American and Russian diplomats sit down in Geneva in Monday ahead of larger, more inclusive meetings in Brussels and Vienna on Wednesday and Thursday that will explore those issues in perhaps more depth.

Still, the mantras "nothing about Ukraine without Ukraine" and "nothing about Europe without Europe" have become al-

most cliché in Washington in recent weeks, and senior U.S. officials have gone so far as to say they expect Russia to lie about the content of Monday's meeting to try to stoke divisions.

"We fully expect that the Russian side will make public comments following the meeting on Monday that will not reflect the true nature of the discussions that took place," said one senior U.S. official who will participate in the talks. The official was not authorized to speak publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity.

That official and others

have urged allies to view with "extreme skepticism" anything Moscow says about the so-called Strategic Stability Talks and wait until they are briefed by the American participants to form opinions.

Blinken has accused Russia of "gaslighting" and mounting a full-scale disinformation campaign designed to blame Ukraine, NATO and particularly the United States for the current tensions and undercut Western unity. He said Russian President Vladimir Putin is engaged in an all-out war on the truth that ignores Russia's own provocative and destabilizing actions over the course of the past decade.

"Russia seeks to challenge the international system itself and to unravel our trans-Atlantic alliance, erode our unity, pressure democracies into failure," Blinken said on Friday, going through a list of offending Russian activity ranging from military intervention in Ukraine and Georgia to chemical weapons attacks on Putin critics to election interference in the U.S. and elsewhere, cybercrime and support for dictators.

Despite several conversations between President Joe Biden and Putin, including an in-person meeting last summer, Blinken said such behavior continues, at increasing risk to the post-World War II global order. □



Riot police walk to block demonstrators during a protest in Almaty, Kazakhstan, Jan. 5, 2022. With the fate of Ukraine and potentially broader post-Cold War European stability at stake, the United States and Russia are holding critical strategic talks that could shape the future of not only their bilateral ties but the relationship between the U.S. and its NATO allies. Prospects are bleak.

(AP Photo/Vladimir Tretyakov)

Amid tensions, Bosnian Serbs celebrate outlawed holiday

by Radul Radovanovic

Associated Press

(AP) — Amid Bosnia's greatest political crisis since the end of its 1992-95 interethnic war, the country's Serbs celebrated an outlawed holiday Sunday with a provocative parade showcasing armored vehicles, police helicopters and law enforcement officers with rifles, marching in lock-step and singing a nationalist song. Addressing several thousand spectators gathered in Banja Luka, the de-facto capital of the Serb-run part of the country, Bosnian Serb nationalist leader Milorad Dodik disparaged sanctions Washington slapped on him last week over his alleged corrupt activities and threats to tear the country apart.

"This gathering is the best response to those who deny us our rights, ... who keep imposing sanctions on us," Dodik said.

"It proves to me that I must listen to you, that you did not elect me to fulfil Americans' wishes but to fulfil the wishes of Serb people," he added. The Jan. 9 holiday commemorates the date in 1992 when Bosnian Serbs declared the creation of their own state in Bosnia, igniting the multi-ethnic country's devastating, nearly 4-year-long war that became a byname for eth-



Members of the police forces of Republic of Srpska march during a parade marking the 30th anniversary of the Republic of Srpska in Banja Luka, northern Bosnia, Sunday, Jan. 9, 2022. This week Bosnian Serb political leader Milorad Dodik was slapped with new U.S. sanctions for alleged corruption.

nic cleansing and genocide.

The holiday was banned in 2015 by Bosnia's top court which ruled that the date, which falls on a Serb Christian Orthodox religious holiday, discriminates against the country's other ethnic groups — Muslim Bosniaks and Catholic Croats.

During the war that killed 100,000 people and turned half of the country's population into refugees, Bosniaks and Croats were persecuted and almost completely expelled from the

now Serb-administered half of Bosnia.

After the war, under the terms of the U.S.-brokered Dayton peace agreement, Bosnia was divided into two semi-autonomous governing entities — Republika Srpska and one dominated by Bosniaks and Croats.

Each part has its own government, parliament and police, but the two are linked by shared, state-wide institutions, including the judiciary, army, security agencies and tax administration. All actions at a

national level require consensus from all three ethnic groups.

Dodik has for years been advocating the separation of the Bosnian Serb mini-state from the rest of the country and making it part of neighboring Serbia.

This winter, he intensified his secessionist campaign, pledging to form an exclusively Serb army, judiciary and tax system. He described Bosniaks as "second-rate people" and "treacherous converts" who sold their "original (Or-

thodox Christian) faith for dinner."

Earlier Sunday, as part of holiday celebrations, Bosnian Serb officials participated in Serb Christian Orthodox ceremonies, broadcast live on local television, in the city's main church, while a special police unit sang, while marching in the parade, a song about defending the Orthodox Christian cross and "the shiny new Serb Republic."

The celebrations of the divisive holiday continue each year despite it being outlawed by the top court, and have been consistently criticized by the U.S. and the European Union.

However, the parade and other ceremonies on Sunday, were attended by the top officials of neighboring Serbia, including prime minister Ana Brnabic and parliament speaker Ivica Dacic; Russian and Chinese diplomats in Bosnia; and several officials of France's far-right National Rally party.

In recent months, the staunchly pro-Moscow Dodik has repeatedly voiced hope that the Serbs' "true friends" — Russia, China and the champions of illiberal democracy within the European Union — will serve as his bulwark against the "tyranny" of Western democracies. □

(AP Photo/Radivoje Pavicic)

West African regional leaders impose new sanctions on Mali



Col. Assimi Goita meets with a high-level delegation from the West African regional bloc known as ECOWAS, at the Ministry of Defense in Bamako, Mali, Aug. 22, 2020. West African regional leaders signaled Sunday Jan. 9, 2022 at a special meeting in Ghana's capital that they will oppose an effort by the Mali's coup leader to extend his time in power by four more years instead of holding democratic elections next month as originally promised.

(AP Photo, File)

By Francis Kokutse and Krista Larson
Associated Press

(AP) — West African regional leaders imposed new sanctions Sunday on Mali,

suspending most commerce and financial aid to the country after its military rulers said they would stay in power for four more years instead of holding an election next month as promised.

The sanctions mark the steepest consequences for Mali to date, and include land and air border closures with other countries belonging to ECOWAS, according to a statement released after a day-long meeting in Ghana's capital.

The junta led by Col. Assimi Goita initially had agreed to hold a new election in late February, 18 months after it first seized power.

The military leadership now says the next presidential election will take place instead in 2026, giving Goita four more years in power.

In a statement, regional leaders called this timeframe "totally unacceptable" and said it "simply means that an illegitimate military transition government will take the Malian people hostage during the next five years."

The business sanctions won't apply to essentials like pharmaceuticals, and medical supplies and equipment to fight COVID-19. Petroleum products and electricity are also excluded, the regional bloc said. But all of Mali's finan-

cial assets held in the regional bloc's central bank and other commercial banks will be blocked. And ECOWAS will suspend its financial aid to Mali. Previous sanctions had only targeted junta leadership with travel bans and asset freezes. After overthrowing Mali's democratically elected president, coup leader Goita had promised to swiftly return the country to democratic rule. Doubts deepened about his intentions, though, after he effectively launched a second coup nine months later, forcing out the chosen transitional civilian leaders and becoming president himself. □





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This will be South Sudan's hungriest year ever, experts say

By Sam Mednick and
Deng Machol
Associated Press

(AP) — Nyayiar Kuol cradled her severely malnourished 1-year-old daughter as they traveled for 16 hours on a crowded barge to the nearest hospital to their home in rural South Sudan. For months she had been feeding her four children just once a day, unable to cultivate because of disastrous flooding and without enough food assistance from the government or aid groups. She worries her daughter might die.

Seated on her hospital bed in Old Fangak town in hard-hit Jonglei state, the 36-year-old Kuol tried to calm her daughter while blaming the government for not doing more. Nearly two years have passed since South Sudan formed a coalition government as part of a fragile peace deal to end a five-year civil war that plunged pockets of the country into famine, and yet Kuol said nothing has changed.

"If this country was really at peace, there wouldn't be hunger like there is now," she said.

More people will face hunger this year in South Sudan than ever, said aid groups. That's because of the worst floods in 60 years, as well as conflict and the sluggish implementation of the peace agreement that has denied much of the country basic services.

"2021 was the worst year

since independence in the 10 years of the life of this country and 2022 will be worse. Food insecurity is at horrific levels," said Matthew Hollingworth, country representative for the World Food Program in South Sudan.

While the latest food security report by aid groups and the government has yet to be released, several aid officials familiar with the situation said preliminary data show that nearly 8.5 million people — out of the country's 12 million — will face severe hunger, an 8% increase from last year. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they weren't authorized to speak to the media.

Aid officials say worst affected Fangak county is now as bad as Pibor county was this time last year, when global food security experts said some 30,000 Pibor residents were likely in famine.

During trips to three South Sudan states in December, some civilians and government officials expressed concern to The Associated Press that people were beginning to starve to death. In October, a mother and her child died in Pulpham village because they didn't have food, said Jeremiah Gatmai, the humanitarian representative for the government in Old Fangak.

Nearly 1 million people across South Sudan have been affected by the floods, according to the

United Nations, which last year had to reduce food aid by half in most places because of funding constraints, affecting some 3 million people.

Two years of floods have prevented people from farming and killed more than 250,000 livestock in Jonglei state alone, according to the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization. Some displaced families in Old Fangak said ground-up water lilies were their only daily meal. "We eat once a day in the morning and then sleep without food," said Nyaluak Chuol. The 20-year-old like some others lost her fishing net in the floods. When she has enough money, she pays a boy to fish for her.

Many residents from Jonglei have fled to neighboring states for food and shelter but have found little respite. In Malakal town, some 3,000 displaced people were crammed into abandoned buildings or sheltered under trees with nothing to eat.

"We're eating leaves and look like skeletons," Tut Jaknyang told the AP. The 60-year-old has received food assistance just once since fleeing floods in Jonglei in July, he said. He and others said a sack of donated rice had to be shared among 20 people.

North of Malakal in the town of Wau Shilluk, health workers said the number of malnourished children coming into the medical



Nyayiar Kuol holds her severely malnourished 1-year-old daughter Chuoder Wal in a hospital run by Medicines Sans Frontieres (Doctors Without Borders) in Old Fangak in Jonglei state, South Sudan Tuesday, Dec. 28, 2021. Aid groups say more people than ever in the country will face hunger this year, because of the worst floods in 60 years as well as conflict and the sluggish implementation of the peace agreement that has denied much of the country basic services.

(AP Photo/Sam Mednick)

center rose from 10 between January and July to 26 between August and December, according to Christina Dak, a health worker with the International Medical Corps.

While flooding is the main driver of hunger, it's compounded by government deadlock as the country's two main political parties try to share power.

Local officials in Malakal aligned with the opposition accused members of longtime President Salva Kiir's party of undermining them by blocking political appointees and not letting them fire corrupt staff, making it hard to govern and provide services.

"We're not working as one team. No one's looking out for the people," said Byinj Engst, the health minister in

Upper Nile state.

Adding to the political tensions is ongoing fighting between government and opposition-aligned militias in the country's breadbasket in the southwest.

Government spokesman Michael Makuei said some relief such as medical services continues but there is only so much help that national authorities can give. "The floods have destroyed crops, what can the government do in that case?" he said.

Observers' frustration is growing. In a speech to the U.N. Security Council in December, the head of the U.N. mission in South Sudan, Nicholas Haysom, warned of a collapse in the country's peace deal if all parties didn't renew their political will. □

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Test today, fly tomorrow during the holidays

PALM BEACH — MedCare's Fit2Fly COVID-19 Testing Centers has improved its services when it comes to turn around time for results. As of November its offering same day test results (previously it was 24 hours) on both PCR and Antigen tests.

This in part is to comply with the updated December 6, CDC requirement for travel to the United States, where all air passengers, regardless of vaccination status, must show a negative COVID-19 test taken no more than 1 day before travel to the United States.

MedCare Fit2Fly Testing Center at the Cove Mall is opposite the Holiday Inn and is open every day for walk-ins from 8 AM through 6 PM. MedCare's other location is situated at The Courtyard by Marriott Aruba Resort, is across the street from the RIU Hotel and is open every day from 8:00 AM until 2 PM. These two locations are at a stone's throw from your resort, condominium, or other vacation accommodation. Walk-ins are welcome.

MedCare Clinic, a high-quality medical clinic that specializes in urgent care for tourists and that has been appointed as the national COVID-19 clinic for tourists, and Laboratorio di Servizio, a full-service modern medical laboratory with state-of-the-art equipment, have partnered up to provide fast and reliable



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accredited by the Dutch Council for Accreditation (M317).

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- Divi Aruba Phoenix Beach Resort
- The Hilton Aruba Caribbean Resort
- Hyatt Regency Aruba Resort and Casino
- Renaissance Wind Creek Aruba Resort
- The Ritz-Carlton Resort.

Please contact your front desk for more information on our Testing Centers at these properties.

Private bookings

For your convenience, Medcare also offers private testing at your accommodation/hotel room for a one-time service fee of \$120. This fee covers testing up to 10 people (one appointment, at one location and a specific time). Additional persons will be charged \$10 per person. Regular testing fees applies. □

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AHATA: Hotels lost 25% of occupancy in January

ORANJESTAD – The Aruba Hotel & Tourism Association has released the most recent hotel performance results for December and an updated projection for the coming months.

DECEMBER 2021

DATA:

- **Occupancy:** The occupancy rate was 69%, which is 17% lower than in December 2019. Occupancy was projected at 76%, however, the COVID

situation in the U.S. and Aruba's new entry requirements caused cancellations for the last week of December.

- **ADR:** The average daily rate for occupied rooms was \$337.38, which is 0.5% less than in 2019.
- **RevPAR:** The revenue per available room was 17% less than in 2019, at \$232.93

OCCUPANCY 2021:

Average occupancy for all

hotels in 2021 was 56.7%, which is a 67% recovery compared to 2019.

OCCUPANCY FORECAST:

Due to Aruba's COVID situation, the CDC placed the island on Level 4 Alert level for travel. The highest level of alert caused further cancellations and a slowing of the industry's recovery. The data indicates a loss

	Occupancy Forecast 01.05.22	Occupancy Forecast 12.05.21	% Drop in Forecasted Occupancy
January	56%	75%	-25%
February	57%	72%	-21%
March	57%	-	

	Occupancy Forecast	Recovery compared to 2019
January	56%	63%
February	57%	62%
March	57%	64%

been adjusted accordingly.

TIMESHARE

AHATA's Timeshare properties also experienced cancellations for the last week of December and ended up with a an 82% occupancy for the month and 75% for the year 2021. For January the expected occupancy rate is 86%.

AHATA member hotels: Amsterdam Manor Beach Resort, Barceló Aruba, Boardwalk Boutique Hotel, Brickell Bay Beach Club, Bucuti & Tara Beach Resort, Courtyard by Marriott, Divi & Tamarijn All-Inclusive, Eagle Aruba Resort, Holiday Inn Resort Aruba, Hyatt Regency Aruba, Hyatt Place Aruba Airport, Manchebo Beach Resort, Marriott Aruba & Stellaris Casino, Paradera Park, Radisson Blu Aruba, Renaissance Aruba Resort, The Ritz-Carlton Aruba, RIU Palace Aruba, RIU Palace Antillas, Talk of the Town Hotel.

AHATA member timeshares: Divi Aruba Phoenix, Divi Dutch Village, Divi Village Golf, La Cabana, Marriott Ocean Club, Marriott Surf Club. □

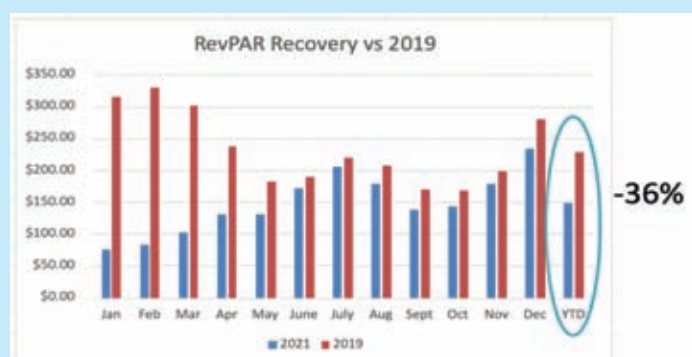
AHATA: 2021 RevPAR was 36% less than in 2019

ORANJESTAD – The Aruba Hotel & Tourism Association has released the hotel performance results for 2021.

In 2021, Aruba's hotels experienced an average occupancy of 56.7%; a recovery rate of 67% compared to 2019.

Compared to 2019, the Average Daily Rate (ADR) for sold rooms was 5% lower at \$262.12 in 2021.

RevPAR, the average revenue per available room, is the primary performance indicator of the tourism industry. In 2021 Aruba's RevPAR did not reach 2019 levels. Hotels achieved a RevPAR of \$148.56 which is 36% less than in 2019. In other words, the RevPAR recovered by 64% in 2021. □



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Update COVID-19 January 10, 2022

ORANJESTAD – Here is the latest update on the on-going COVID situation in Aruba.

On January 9 2022, Aruba registered 524 new cases, of which 674 were non-residents. The number of active positive cases is 4,494, whereas the average daily cases over the past seven days total 831. The positivity rate stands at 64%.

Aruba in the fifth Wave:

In the first wave in March 2021, we reached 69 confirmed cases. The second wave in August 2020 registered 1630 confirmed cases. The third wave occurred at the end of 2020 and caused 700 confirmed cases but lasted longer. The fourth wave happened in July 2021 with 1076 registered cases, and the fifth wave started in December

2021.

Hospitalizations:

In August 2021, COVID-related hospitalizations reached an alarming level. The government imposed a curfew from 10:00 pm - 5:00 am. The hospital reached its full capacity and had no room to treat patients injured in car accidents. Consequently many patients were sent to Colombia for hospitalizations. During the 4th wave, the hospital almost entered into Code Black (where there are not enough beds to treat patients), and drastic measures were needed to ease the surge.

This 5th wave does not require any drastic measures so far, as there are only 21 patients in the hospital of which three are in the ICU and 19 on the general ward.

According to the Prime Minister, the current situation at the hospital is under control. This is the indicator for the authorities whether to impose more or fewer measures.

The Prime Minister emphasized that they are constantly searching for the right balance between healthcare and the economy.

The measures are as follows since of December 30, 2021

- Curfew: NO Curfew
- Closing Time: 12:00 am for all business for the exception of Casino's which can stay open till 1:00 am
- Restaurants: Max. 6 people per table.
- Social Activities and Sports: Max. people: 60 indoors, 75 outdoors.
- Funerals: Max. people: 75 (if the space is adequately large enough)

- Area Ban 7:00 pm - 5:00 am
- Nightlife: Dancing is not permitted
- Entertainment: Max 5 musicians on stage.
- Gathering Ban: Max. 6 people.
- Shopping: 1 person per family

The following measures remain applicable:

- Masks: Use of masks is mandatory inside at all establishments.
- Alcohol: Ban of alcohol on public roads: 24 hours.
- Social Distancing: Continue maintaining social distance.

New isolation and quarantine guidelines

The Crisis Team, after thorough consideration of the different advice and analysis, has changed the isolation and quarantine guidelines. Once a person gets a positive SARS-CoV-2 test result, the person should isolate for five days and avoid contact with others in the household. The five days of isolation start on the date the person received the positive test result. If after five days in isolation you still have symptoms, you must continue to isolate until you no longer

have symptoms. After 24 hours without any symptoms, the person should complete the form sent by email. Those living in the same house as the person who tested positive should quarantine for 5 days, starting on the day they had immediate contact with the person who tested positive and should wear masks at all times. The person who tested positive must inform others living in the same home about the positive test result. The isolation and quarantine protocols are included in the email sent to anyone who tests positive. Please be aware that the DVG will no longer contact those who tested positive or anyone living in the same household. The DVG urges those who tested positive to complete the form that sent by email and to provide information about everyone living in the same home that needs to quarantine.

Exceptions as of Jan 8, 2022 Persons that have received the booster shot (so all 3 vaccine shots) and persons that were infected with Covid within past 4 weeks no longer need to quarantine when a housemate tested positive. □

Trailer BRA in San Nicolas for COVID vaccination

ORANJESTAD – Starting Tuesday, January 11, the Crisis Team will use the Mobile Unit of the BRA as a vaccination location in San Nicolas.

This will provide the San Nicolas community and its surroundings the opportunity to get their first, second or third vaccine closer home. The Operation Mobile Unit will be stationed at the IMSan and is open for vaccines from 8:00 am to 3:00 pm nonstop. The Crisis team and the Department of Health (DVG) are urging the community to get their booster shot if they received their second vaccine more than three months ago. They also urge those older than 12 years who have not received their first or second vaccine yet, to get this at the Operation Mobile Unit at the IMSan. On January 5, 2022, 959 persons received their booster vaccine at the Centro Libertador Betico Croes. Now persons 40 years and older can also receive their booster shot with no appointment; they can walk in. Walk-in is possible between 8:00 am and 3:00 pm. □

US unemployment sinks to 3.9% as many more people find jobs

By Christopher Rugaber
Associated Press

(AP) — The nation's unemployment rate fell in December to a healthy 3.9% — a pandemic low — even as employers added a modest 199,000 jobs, evidence that they are struggling to fill jobs with many Americans reluctant to return to the workforce.

The drop in the jobless rate, from 4.2% in November, indicated that many more people found work last month. Indeed, despite the slight hiring gain reported by businesses, 651,000 more workers said they were employed in December compared with November.

Still, the data reported Friday by the Labor Department reflected the state of the job market in early December — before the spike in COVID-19 infections began to disrupt the economy.

Economists have cautioned that job growth may slow in January and possibly February because of omicron cases, which have forced millions of newly infected workers to stay home and quarantine. The economy is still about 3.6 million jobs short of its pre-pandemic level. For now, steady hiring is being driven by strong consumer demand that has remained resilient despite chronic supply shortages. Consumer spending and business purchases of equipment are likely propelling the economy to a robust annual growth rate of roughly 7% in the final three months of 2021. Americans' confidence in the economy rose slightly in December, according to the Conference Board, suggesting that spending was probably healthy for much of last month.

Wages also rose sharply in December, with average hourly pay jumping 4.7% compared with a year ago. That pay increase is a sign that companies are competing fiercely to fill their open jobs. A record-high wave of quitting, as many workers seek better jobs, is helping fuel pay raises.

Low unemployment and rapid wage gains, though,



Marriott human resources recruiter Mariela Cuevas, left, talks to Lisbet Oliveros, during a job fair at Hard Rock Stadium, Friday, Sept. 3, 2021, in Miami Gardens, Fla. Federal Reserve policymakers at a meeting last month said the U.S. job market was nearly at levels healthy enough that the central bank's low-interest rate policies were no longer needed. That's according to minutes of the meeting released Wednesday, Jan. 5, 2022.

(AP Photo/Marta Lavandier, File)

could further heighten inflation as companies raise prices to cover rising labor costs. Price increases have already surged to a four-decade high, prompting a sharp pivot by the Federal Reserve, from keeping rates low to support hiring to moving toward raising interest rates to combat inflation. Most economists expect the Fed to raise its benchmark short-term rate, now pegged near zero, in March and to do so two or three additional times this year. "Companies are paying up for workers," said Neil Dutta, an economist at Renaissance Macro Research. "This is consistent with inflation well above 2%, which keeps the pressure on the Fed to raise interest rates."

Among those benefiting from the intense competition for workers is Patrick Freeman, a custodian at a furniture factory in Hickory, North Carolina. In late November, Freeman, 57, was given a permanent job after having spent two years as a temp. Freeman got the good news at a time when many of his colleagues have found other jobs elsewhere, leaving the company short-staffed.

"They've scattered," he said, referring to his fellow

employees. "They're really short in a lot of areas. I'm sticking around."

Having come on board permanently, Freeman enjoyed a pay jump from \$12 to \$16 an hour. After a 60-day probation period, he will also receive health, dental, and vision benefits. And he's eligible for the company's employee stock ownership program. Becky Frankiewicz, president of the staffing giant ManpowerGroup North America, said that many of Manpower's clients are shifting employees from temporary to permanent status, because with workers scarce, they want to "lock people up."

Frankiewicz said Manpower has calculated that because of omicron, absenteeism is running at three times its peak in 2021. Yet there has been "no slowdown in demand" for workers, she said.

More broadly through the economy, though, job growth will likely take a big hit this month from the omicron variant, which has sickened millions of Americans, forced airlines to cancel thousands of flights, reduced traffic at restaurants and bars, and caused some major school systems to close, potentially keep-

ing some parents at home with children and unable to work. That could make it even harder for companies to remain fully staffed and could slow the economy, too. Michael Pearce, an economist at Capital Economics, notes that millions of workers will likely be quarantining at home next week. For those who aren't paid — about one-fifth of the U.S. workforce lacks sick leave — their jobs won't be counted by the government. That would lower the employment gain reported by businesses for January. Omicron has forced so many workers to call in sick, it's disrupting businesses ranging from ski resorts to hospitals. Alaska Airlines said it's cutting 10% of its flights in January because of an "unprecedented" number of employees calling in sick.

The wave of infections is also likely weighing on jobs at restaurants and bars. The number of Americans willing to eat at restaurants started to slip in late December, according to the reservations website OpenTable. Restaurant traffic was nearly at pre-pandemic levels for much of November but had fallen nearly 25% below those levels by Dec. 30, based

on a weekly average of OpenTable data.

But because omicron is less virulent than previous COVID-19 variants and few states or localities have moved to limit business operations, economists say they believe its economic impact will be short-lived.

Omicron might have had some impact on December's data, with the 199,000 added jobs having fallen well short of what economists had expected. A category that includes restaurants, bars, hotels and casinos gained just 53,000 positions, down from the several hundred thousand a month that were added earlier this year.

Even with December's modest gain, 2021 was one of the best years for American workers in decades, though one that followed 2020, the job market's worst year since records began in 1939, a consequence of the pandemic recession. Companies posted a record number of open jobs last year and offered sharply higher pay to try to find and keep workers.

The number of jobs rose 4.5% in 2021, the largest such gain since 1978. That partly reflected a bounce-back from the steep losses of 2020, when the nation shed 6.2% of its jobs.

Many companies are looking past the omicron wave and still adding workers. Angie Podolak, director of human capital at Beneficial State Bank based in Oakland, California, said the company, which employs about 195 people, is enjoying strong growth in auto lending and is seeking to fill 12 jobs.

Though some of its front-line workers have called in sick, Podolak said the bank hasn't had to reduce hours or lose business because of omicron. Nor has it had to slow its recruiting efforts. Beneficial already conducts job interviews by video. "It's really just been business as usual for us," Podolak said. "I'm knocking on wood and crossing my fingers right now. But we haven't seen a significant impact on our recruiting." □

CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS 48 Exams for

1 Comedian
Sykes

6 Petty
quarrels

11 Left, on a
liner

12 Pastel
shade

13 Italian
seaport

14 Spare

15 Proceed
slowly

17 Make a
choice

18 "Shane"
star

22 "Apollo
13" org.

23 Discus-
sion sites

27 Second
U.S.
president

29 "I under-
stand!"

30 Prepare,
as a
manu-
script

32 Window
section

33 Block-
buster

35 Descrip-
tive wd.

38 Opposed

39 Knight's
pursuit

41 Without
break

45 Beneath

46 Mink's
cousin

47 Japanese
dog

DOWN

1 Funny
fellow

2 Gorilla, for
one

3 Sine
qua —

4 Brag,
in a way

5 To any
extent

6 Iditarod
animal

7 Movies,
in slang

8 Choir
voice

9 Diamond
cover

10 Jazz
singing
style

16 Clumsy
one

18 Med. sch.
subject

19 Titled
woman

20 Soon, in
memos

21 Suggest
subtly

24 Nevada
neighbor

25 Short skirt

26 Dele
undoer

28 Indonesian
island

31 Skillet
porch

34 Small
hue

35 Blue
a donut

36 Dip, as
foes

37 Empire's
Collection

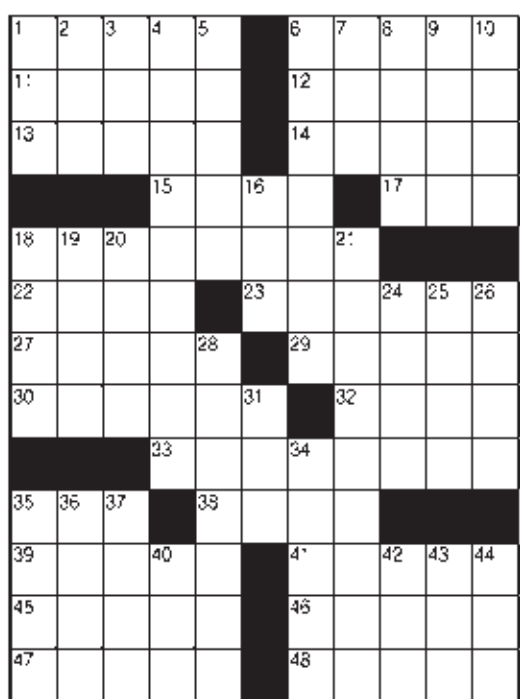
40 Greek
vowel

42 Snare
Hosp.

43 workers



Saturday's answer



AXYDLBAAXR
is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

I-10

CRYPTOQUOTE

MD DARPS VRAE ORMC SLRS

VRAJBRPSJND PNKVKAROC.

RAU SLDA SLD BDM SLRS

YJAKCL SLDV. — ROODA SJPZDN

Saturday's Cryptoquote: THE MORNING PAPER IS JUST AS NECESSARY TO AN AMERICAN AS DEW IS TO THE GRASS. — JOSH BILLINGS

If the Golden Globe Awards aren't on television, will anyone care?



In this Jan. 6, 2009, file photo, Golden Globe statuettes are seen during a news conference at the Beverly Hilton Hotel in Beverly Hills, Calif.

(AP Photo/Matt Sayles, File)

By Lindsey Bahr

Associated Press

(AP) - That's just one of the uneasy questions facing the embattled Hollywood Foreign Press Association, which is proceeding with its film awards Sunday night without a telecast, nominees, celebrity guests, a red carpet, a host, press or even a livestream.

In a year beset by controversy, the self-proclaimed biggest party in Hollywood, has been reduced to little more than a Twitter feed.

Members of the HFPA and some recipients of the group's philanthropic grants are gathering at the Beverly Hilton Hotel for a 90-minute private event starting at 9 p.m. ET Sunday. The names of the film and television winners will be revealed to the world in real time on the organization's social media feeds and website. Special emphasis, they say, will be given to their charitable efforts over the years.

That the organization is proceeding with any kind of event came as a surprise to many in Hollywood. The HFPA came under fire after a Los Angeles Times investigation revealed in February ethical lapses and a stunning lack of diversity — there was not a single Black journalist in the 87-person group. Studios and PR firms threatened to boycott. Tom Cruise even returned his three Golden Globes, while other A-listers condemned the group on social media.

They pledged reform last

year, but even after a public declaration during the 78th show, their longtime broadcast partner NBC announced in May that it would not air the 2022 Golden Globes because, "Change of this magnitude takes time and work." The broadcaster typically pays some \$60 million for the rights to air the show, which ranks among the most-watched awards shows behind the Oscars and the Grammys.

Though often ridiculed, Hollywood had come to accept the Golden Globes as a legitimate and helpful stop in a competitive awards season. And for audiences around the world, it was a reasonably lively night, with glamorous fashion, major stars, the promise of champagne-fueled speeches, and hosts — from Tina Fey and Amy Poehler to Ricky Gervais — that regularly poked fun at the HFPA.

After the NBC blow, it was widely expected that the HFPA would simply sit the year out. Hollywood studios

and publicists also largely opted out from engaging with the group as they had in years past, with some declining to provide screeners of films for consideration. When nominees were announced last month, few celebrated publicly.

This year Kenneth Branagh's semi-autobiographical drama "Belfast," about growing up during the Troubles, and Jane Campion's "The Power of the Dog," a gothic Western set in 1925 Montana with Kirsten Dunst and Benedict Cumberbatch, both received a leading seven nominations, including best picture. HBO's "Succession" led the TV side with five nominations, including nods for best drama.

Many A-listers got acting nominations as well, including Will Smith ("King Richard"), Kristen Stewart ("Spencer"), Leonardo DiCaprio ("Don't Look Up"), Denzel Washington ("The Tragedy of Macbeth"), Ben Affleck ("The Tender Bar") and Lady Gaga ("House of Gucci"). In a normal year, the nomination would be added to promotional campaigns and advertisements, but this year most chose to not acknowledge the nod.

The press association claims that in the months since its 2021 show, it has remade itself. The group has added a chief diversity officer; overhauled its board; inducted 21 new members, including six Black journalists; brought in the NAACP on a five-year partnership; and updated its code of conduct. □



Caitriona Balfe, from left, Jamie Dornan, Judi Dench, Jude Hill and Lewis McAskie appear in a scene from "Belfast."

(Rob Youngson/Focus Features via AP)

Russia, US hold working dinner to open Geneva talks



Russian Deputy Foreign Minister and head of delegation Sergey Ryabkov attends a Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) conference in Beijing of the UN Security Council's five permanent members (P5) China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States, China, Wednesday, Jan. 30, 2019.

By K. Manenkov/J. Keaton
Associated Press

(AP) — Top Russian and U.S. officials held a working dinner in Geneva on Sunday as part of the kickoff to a string of meetings in three European cities this week, with bilateral ties at a low ebb over Russia's military buildup near Ukraine.

Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov and other Russian officials arrived in the evening for a meeting at the residence of the U.S. ambassador to the Conference on Disarmament, diplomatic officials said. The luxury apartment overlooks Lake Geneva. Ryabkov was meeting with U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman and her team.

Earlier Sunday, Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman

Maria Zakharova said on state television that a first round of "narrow-format" talks on security would get underway during the day, according to Tass news agency.

The less formal Sunday talks come ahead of a broader discussion between the two diplomats and their teams at the U.S. mission in Geneva starting Monday, a first step toward rekindling dialogue as ties have worsened because Russia has deployed an estimated 100,000 troops along its border with Ukraine.

Concerns have risen about a broader Russian military incursion in the country. Russian President Vladimir Putin's government has laid out a list of demands, such as seeking guarantees that the NATO military

alliance won't seek to ex-

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pand any further eastward to countries like Ukraine or Georgia, which are former Soviet republics.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken told ABC's "This Week" on Sunday he didn't expect any breakthroughs in talks in the bilateral talks in Geneva or during conversations in Brussels, at a meeting of the NATO-Russia Council, and at the Organization for Cooperation and Security in Europe in Vienna later this week. □



Marriott Aruba Surf Club PLATINUM SEASON

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2 Bed Oceanside \$17,500
2 Bed Ocean view \$16,500
2 Bed Garden view \$15,500
3 Bed Ocean view \$28,000
WK 51 Garden view \$42,500
WK 52 Oceanside \$55,000
WK 7 and 14 - all views

GOLD SEASON

2 Bed Oceanfront \$14,000
2 Bed Oceanside \$11,000
2 Bed Ocean view \$8,000
2 Bed Garden view \$6,000
3 Bed Ocean view \$13,000

Marriott Aruba Ocean Club PLATINUM SEASON

2 Bed Oceanfront \$29,000
2 Bed Ocean view \$18,000
1 Bed ocean front \$13,000
1 Bed ocean View \$11,000

GOLD SEASON

2 Bed Oceanfront \$14,000
2 Bed Ocean view \$9,500
1 Bed oceanfront \$9,000
1 Bed ocean View \$6,500

** Destination Points \$8.00 per point

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1 Bed wk 51 \$6,500

Divi Aruba Phoenix

1 bed wk 20 unit 633 \$11,000
2 bed wk 11 unit 101 ground floor
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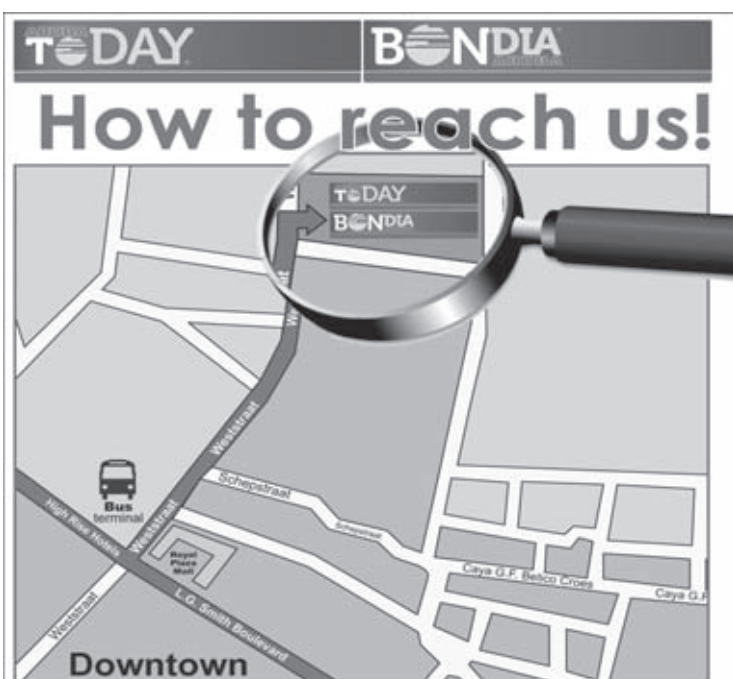
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Denver Broncos fire coach Vic Fangio after 3 losing seasons

By Arnie Stapleton

Associated Press

(AP) — Vic Fangio was fired on Sunday morning as coach of the Denver Broncos after going 19-30 in three seasons.

Team president and CEO Joe Ellis, who will step down later this year, said general manager George Paton will have “full authority to select the next head coach.”

“This morning, George and I informed Vic of the decision to part ways with him as head coach,” Ellis said in a statement. “For the last three seasons, Vic put his heart and soul into coaching the Broncos. I want to thank Coach Fangio for giving his maximum effort to our organization since the day he was hired.”

Fangio released his own statement in which he thanked the organization and fans and praised Paton as one of the NFL’s top GMs: “Broncos fans, you have a great one in George.”

Fangio said he appreciated the team’s “fight and character you showed each and every week. No matter the adversity, circumstances or challenges we faced, you never backed down. I am proud to be associated with this group of fighters and competitors.”

And he reiterated that the franchise is on the cusp of returning to greatness.

“The foundation is in place for this team to accomplish great things,” he said. “The future is bright for the Denver Broncos, and I wish the organization nothing but the best.”

The Broncos lost their final four games to finish 7-10, capped by a 28-24 loss to Kansas City on Saturday in which they blew a fourth-quarter lead and extended their losing streak against the Chiefs to 13 games.

Fangio met with Paton ahead of the season finale and laid out his plan to fix the Broncos’ myriad problems that extended the team’s playoff drought to six seasons and string of losing records to five years.

Fangio led Denver to a 5-11 mark last season and



Denver Broncos head coach Vic Fangio walks along the sidelines during the second half of an NFL football game against the Las Vegas Raiders, Sunday, Dec. 26, 2021, in Las Vegas.

(AP Photo/David Becker)

went 7-9 in 2019 after he replaced Vance Joseph, who was fired after two losing seasons.

Fangio got the job after more than three decades as an assistant, and he burnished his reputation as a defensive master during his time in Denver. But the Broncos didn’t win, and that cost him his job.

Fangio and Paton hit it off when Paton was hired last year to replace John Elway. They saw eye-to-eye on the draft and many felt their close relationship would help Fangio survive a third losing season.

“I have tremendous respect for Vic and all he’s accomplished in the NFL,” Paton said in a statement.

“Over the past year, I appreciate his partnership, friendship and tireless work ethic he demonstrated as our head coach.

“Vic will continue to have great success in this league, and I thank him for everything he did for the Broncos as well as me personally.” Fangio isn’t expected to be out of work long. He will be a candidate for a defensive coordinator job in the new round of coaching changes this month.

Fangio’s creative schemes helped the Broncos thwart some of the best young quarterbacks even when his defense was depleted by injuries or COVID-19. The long list of QBs who have had some of the tough-

est days of their careers against Fangio’s teams include Tua Tagovailoa, Justin Herbert and Patrick Mahomes.

Last month, the Broncos held Joe Burrow to 157 yards passing. Burrow followed that tough afternoon with a two-game stretch against Baltimore and Kansas City in which he threw for a combined 971 yards and eight touchdowns.

Yet Fangio’s teams struggled mightily on offense and special teams and his game management skills, including use of timeouts, challenges and clock handling, came into question in all three of his seasons in Denver.

The Broncos averaged better than 10,000 no-shows over their final six home games, including nearly 15,000 Saturday, a sign the fanbase had grown frustrated with Fangio.

The Broncos were still in the mix of the AFC’s crowded playoff field in mid-December before losing their final four games.

Asked Saturday about his 5-13 record in the AFC West that includes an 0-6 mark against the Chiefs, Fangio said, “Well those other three teams have top-shelf quarterbacks, which is obvious to everybody.”

Equally obvious is how the Broncos have failed to find their own premier passer, swinging and missing on the likes of Paxton Lynch, Drew Lock, Case Keenum and Joe Flacco.

The Broncos have churned through 10 starting quarterbacks since Peyton Manning’s retirement a month after Denver’s win in Super Bowl 50, 11 if you include running back Phillip Lindsay, who started against New Orleans in 2020 when all four of Denver’s quarterbacks were in COVID-19 protocols.

One of Paton’s first moves as GM was to acquire veteran Teddy Bridgewater, who went 7-7 as Denver’s starter before missing the final three games with a concussion.

Lock, the starter in 2020, lost all three of his starts despite not turning the ball over after committing an NFL-high 18 turnovers last season.

Paton is expected to focus his efforts this offseason on finding the Broncos’ sixth different starting QB in six seasons.

Thanks to his trade of Von Miller to the Rams, he has 11 draft picks, including five in the top 100, to either restock his roster or use as chips to acquire a veteran via a trade. He’ll also have nearly \$70 million in cap space to sign free agents.

With so much repair work ahead, Paton added to his plate a search for a head coach, and now the team will have to start from scratch on both offense and defense. □



Denver Broncos head coach Vic Fangio watches during the second half of an NFL football game against the Detroit Lions, Sunday, Dec. 12, 2021, in Denver.

(AP Photo/Jack Dempsey)

Knierim and Frazier join Cain-Gribble and LeDuc at Olympics

By Dave Skretta
Associated Press

(AP) — Like most young skaters, Brandon Frazier had developed a carefully crafted picture in his mind of what it would be like to learn he finally realized his Olympic dreams. Reality looked a whole lot different.

There was no hugging family members. No tearful celebration with friends. Only a Facetime call with his pairs partner, Alexa Knierim, while Frazier waited for the negative COVID-19 tests that would finally free him from his hotel quarantine.

"I never imagined it like it actually went down last night," Frazier said Sunday, four days after his positive test forced the pair to withdraw from the U.S. Figure Skating Championships and petition for a spot at the Winter Games.

"But that's when I knew it meant the absolute world to me," Frazier said, "because it meant just as much to me."

Newly minted U.S. champions Ashley Cain-Gribble and Timothy LeDuc will join Knierim and Frazier in Beijing.

Cain-Gribble said she learned the news after finishing "a huge pizza and cookie dough, so I was feeling pretty good." LeDuc, the first non-binary Olympic athlete, got the call just as he was arriving to his family's Airbnb rental. As for Frazier, sitting alone in his hotel room?

"I hugged the crap out of that pillow," he said with a Cheshire cat-like grin.

The women's team of U.S. champion Mariah Bell, silver medalist Karen Chen, and Alysa Liu was announced Saturday, while Nathan Chen and Vincent Zhou are expected to lead the three men chosen for Beijing later Sunday.

There was no drama in the three dance teams picked for Beijing: Madison Chock and Evan Bates will carry the momentum of a record-setting win at nationals to their third Olympics; runners-up Madison Hubbell and Zachary

Donohue will try to improve on their fourth-place finish at the 2018 Games in Pyeongchang; and Kaitlin Hawayek and Jen-Luc Baker give the Americans a third team that could stand on the podium next month. Their selection for the Olympic team also was confirmed Sunday, shortly before the men's free skate at nationals.

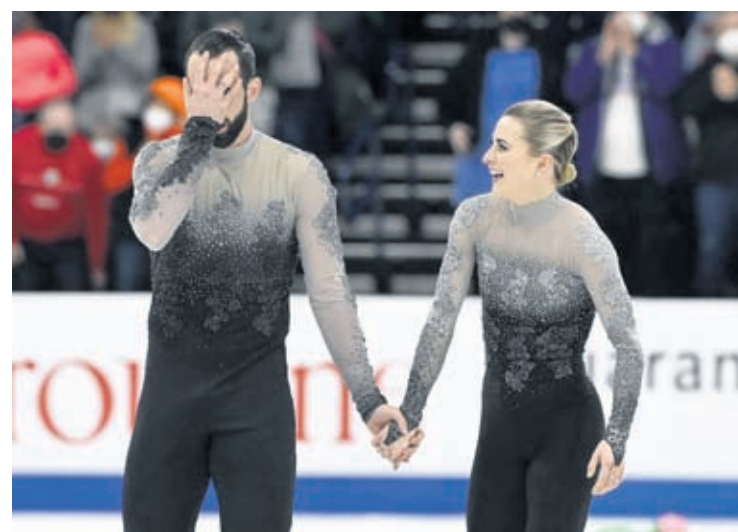
"It's the honor of a lifetime. It's the greatest honor we can achieve in our sport," said Bates, who will make his fourth Olympic trip after going in 2010 with former partner Emily Samuelson. "We're fortunate to go back for the third time, or fourth time, but it never gets old. It's always special each time."

Unlike their teammates, Ha-

wayek and Baker will experience the Olympics for the first time. It's been a long and difficult road for the pair, both of whom have come back from concussions, including Hawayek's this past summer.

"With full transparency, I didn't know what the course of the injury was going to look like as we entered the Olympic season. There was a lot of doubt whether we'd be able to get back to a competition-ready place," she said. "I think we've set ourselves up to continue to grow as the winter went on."

All three American teams, who are close friends as much as rivals and training partners, work under the watchful eyes of Marie-France Dubreuil, Pa-



Ashley Cain-Gribble and Timothy LeDuc compete in the pairs free skate program during the U.S. Figure Skating Championships Saturday, Jan. 8, 2022, in Nashville, Tenn.

(AP Photo/Mark Zaleski)

trice Lauzon and Romain Haguenauer at the Gadbois Centre in Montreal. Also training there are 2018 Olympic silver medalists Gabriella Papadakis and

Guillaume Cizeron, the French ice dancers who had the highest scorer of the Grand Prix season and likely their biggest competition in Beijing. □

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such as the Spicy Caribbean Seafood pasta, Mahi Mahi or pan fried Red Snapper served with Aruban creole sauce or garlic lemon butter. For the carnivores among us there are choices of 8 ounce seasoned Filet Mignon, 12 ounce Rib Eye steak or a French Rack of Lamb seasoned and grilled to perfection. With choices of extra sides of fresh asparagus, seasonal vegetables, mashed or baked potatoes, fries or rice and beans. Combine your personal choice with one of the most exclusive wines from the great selection of international wines to compliment your dish. Kids will enjoy every item of the specially compiled kids menu. Vegetarians will enjoy the roasted vegetable pasta tossed in a light butter sauce and topped with freshly shaved parmesan cheese. As desserts the choices are wild. Homemade key lime pie, coconut flan served with caramel sauce and whipped cream or a NY cheese cake, chocolate brownie with chocolate sauce vanilla ice cream and whipped cream or a delicious oven fresh carrot cake served with orange sauce and candied pecans.



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On Wednesday's and Sunday's singer Paula Ridderstap will make you sing along to all her tunes. Thursday's and Friday's guitarist Ricky Thomas will make you find your groove. And also on Sunday's Tico Kock will make you dance away to the sounds of his steel drum. Whether you're in a romantic mood or more in a swinging mood, there is absolutely a night especially for you. In addition, the best happy hour in Aruba happens right here. Water's Edge Restaurant offers three Happy Hours daily (12 noon – 1 pm, 4 pm – 6 pm, with complimentary hors d'oeuvres served by circulating staff, and again from 9 pm – 10 pm) with all premium brands specially priced.

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